Letter from the Chair

Dear Alumni and Friends of Geography at the University of Wyoming,

Greetings from Laramie and the Department of Geography at the University of Wyoming! As you will see while reading this newsletter, the Department of Geography at UW continues to be active in its teaching, research and service missions. We are fortunate to have a dedicated faculty, knowledgeable staff and great students. Confirming this statement is the number of awards and recognitions received over the past few months by our departmental community.

Last spring three of our graduate students, Richard Vercoe, Suzette Savoie, and Alexa Dugan, were on the Great Plains-Rocky Mountain Division’s World Geography Bowl Team that won the national competition in Seattle (see page 4). This year graduate student Jill Ottman was one of the five high scorers at the regional competition and was placed on the divisional team to participate in the national competition in New York this spring. The graduate program in geography at UW is also thriving. This year eleven new MA students joined the program coming from around the United States and world. We have two new students from Nepal, and another from Thailand. Additionally, students from Michigan, Illinois, Colorado and Oklahoma as well as Wyoming joined our departmental community. A new class of this size and diversity is a testament to the quality of our faculty and their willingness to develop strong mentoring relationships with our incoming students. We are currently reviewing applications for next year, and our pool of applicants is again both large and diverse.

If you have contacted the Department recently, you may have chatted with Ms. Adrienne Szabady. Adrienne joined the Department this past fall semester and will be in charge of processing graduate applications, coordinating teaching and advising evaluations, and helping with the development of departmental publications. Adrienne has several years of experience working on the UW campus, and we are very fortunate to have her in our main office (see page 5).

I am also pleased to announce that Dr. Jacqueline Shinker successfully navigated the tenure and promotion process last spring. As many of you

Notably, Caroline McClure completed a NGS internship during the spring semester 2011 (see page 3).
I would also like to thank the many financial donors to the Department over the past year. The Department is indeed fortunate to have friends and alumni willing to make regular contributions to support our efforts to provide a well-rounded educational experience for our students. These funds are critical to accomplishing our instructional mission, and are used to support class field trips and to supplement the costs of student travel to professional meetings. Geography is a “field science” and we believe it is of great educational value to have our students visit nearby sites that are the topics of class lectures. We also impress upon our students the value of becoming professionally active, which frequently means traveling to professional meetings to present the findings of their research projects. This past fall six of our students presented research papers at two different professional meetings, and another six did so during the spring semester. I attend many of these presentations, and our students not only reflect well upon themselves, but also the Department and the University of Wyoming.

If you have questions about the Department, please feel free to contact me via email (gwebste1@uwyo.edu) or phone (307-766-3311). If you are in Laramie, please feel free to visit the Department – we always enjoy chatting with our alumni and supporters.

Sincerely,

Professor Gerald R. Webster, Chair

Geography Club and Geography Awareness Week

By Dr. Carl Legleiter

In April 2011, the University of Wyoming’s chapter of the Gamma Theta Upsilon geographical honor society inducted several new members – congratulations to all of them! Last fall, the Geography Club was very active, benefitting from the able leadership of co-presidents Lacey Johnsen and Paul Sandler Jr., along with faculty sponsors John Harty and Carl Legleiter. The Geography Club sent a large contingent to the AAG Regional Meeting in Denver, including a team that competed in the Geography Bowl. Graduate student Jill Ottman was one of the top performers in the Bowl and competed for the Great Plains/Rocky Mountain regional team at the national meeting in New York. Fund-raising activities included T-shirt sales (bright yellow and featuring our great Geography Department cowboy/North America logo) and Geography nights at McCallister’s and Arby’s.

The biggest event of the fall semester, as usual, was Geography Awareness Week, with a theme of “Adventure in your Local Community.” The week’s events were a major success and included presentations by (1) UW alum and current National Geographic photographer Joe Rees on his travels around the world, including a recent trip to Mongolia; (2) Geography alum Zach Orenzak on the cartography of rock-climbing, featuring Vedauwoo and other nearby routes; and (3) a discussion on community mapping and the Laramie Atlas project hosted by WyGISC. The highlight of the week was the Geography Bowl, held in the Union Gardens, and featuring 16 highly competitive teams. The Geography Club remains an active and vibrant part of the Department and a great opportunity for our students to get involved.

Geography is a field discipline. This was a lesson repeatedly emphasized through the years by my favorite instructors. I remember counting tree rings on a cloudy autumn day, taking stream measurements in the dead of winter (yes, it was cold!), and visiting historic mining districts on a hot summer day. Seeing the discipline in action made a lasting impression and made me want to explore more of the world around me. As an instructor, it is now my turn to pass the torch of lessons learned in the field onto the next generation of geographers. My classes venture into the field on a weekly basis to discuss readings and how the findings can be applied to the local landscape. Our “field walks” (as they are referred to in my classes) include site visits as diverse as St. Lawrence O’Toole Catholic Church (symbolic landscape), Second Story Bookstore (historic landscape (a former brothel)), and Vedauwoo (experiential landscape). These adventures teach the students that geography is by no means a discipline confined to classroom discussions, but is instead dynamic and very much alive.

My hope is that these students will revisit the lessons learned in the field and forever remember that the world outside our door is a big one, one that continually calls on us to explore.

College of Arts and Sciences
Commencement
Saturday, May 5, 2012
1:30 p.m. Arena Auditorium
In Spring 2011, Caroline McClure was granted one of the coveted internships with the National Geographic Society. She was given the opportunity to be one of nine geography interns at National Geographic to work in the National Geographic Education Foundation and the Education Programs offices. Caroline worked on the Hill Day reports, a one page document that explains the impact of the state Alliances on education as well as on their achievements, events, and outreach efforts. These documents are part of a “Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act” packet that are distributed to all Alliance Coordinators during their annual meeting on Capitol Hill to meet with state representatives. She also directly assisted with the Alliance Coordinators Meeting and helped build the “Speak Up For Geography” campaign site (http://speakupforgeography.org), which is an outreach for the Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act.

Caroline was given the opportunity to learn about the grant writing and awarding process as well as how the Alliances from all over the country function individually and within the National Geographic Alliance Network. She is excited about her experience at National Geographic and while living in D.C. and is ready to share those ideas with the members of the Wyoming Geographic Alliance!

WGA welcomes Caroline McClure back from D.C.!

Great Plains/Rocky Mountain Divisional Meeting

The annual meeting of the GP/RM Division of the AAG was held in Denver, Colorado, October 6-8, 2011. The program included 60 papers, sixteen posters and two panels. The Department was well represented by both faculty and students. Eleven students attended the meeting with three presenting research papers and the remaining students participating on the World Geography Bowl. Graduate student Jill Ottman was one of the high scorers in the bowl, and was a member of the divisional team at the national meeting in New York City in late February.

The following research presentations were made by members of the Department:


**Yi-Ling Chen**, “Housing Affordability Crises and the Housing Movement in Taiwan.”


**Gerald R. Webster**, “The Sanctification of the Washita Massacre Site.”

**John Patrick Harty**, “Tracking the Footsteps of Legends: Determining the Origins of Paul Bunyan Folklore.”

**Clockwise from top-left:** TJ Gajda, Alyssa Enghadi, Jim Stafford, Josh Heyer, Upendra Bom, Trisha Pettigrew, Hannah Gunderman, Julia Snable, and Mac Blewer.

**Hannah Gunderman** (left) and **Trisha Pettigrew** (right).
Awards - Recognitions - Presentations

Geography Bowl Winners

Graduate students Richard Vercoe, Suzette Savoie, and Alexa Dugan were members of the 2011 Great Plains/Rocky Mountain Division’s World Geography Bowl team which won the national competition at the Seattle AAG meeting in April 2011.

National Geographic Society Interns

Once again UW Geography will be represented at the NGS in Washington, D.C. Geography undergraduate students, Pam Bolan and Benjamin Kessler, were awarded National Geographic Society internships this year. Pam will spend spring semester at the NGS, followed by Ben in the fall semester.

Lifetime Achievement Award

Professor Jerry Webster received the Lifetime Achievement award from the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers (SEDAAG) this past November. The award is given annually to a nominee with an extensive record of research and publication, a record of excellence in teaching and advising, and service to academic organizations and the discipline of geography.

Tenure and Promotion

Congratulations to Dr. Jacqueline (J.J.) Shinker who was recently promoted to Associate Professor and granted tenure.

New Ph.D.

Former UW Master’s degree, student Tyra Olstad, recently finished her Ph.D. at Kansas State University. Dr. Olstad’s dissertation was entitled “Zen of the Plains: Journeys through Parks, Prairies, and Self.” Professor Kevin Blake, formerly a UW faculty member, served as her advisor at KSU.

Conference Presentations

Graduate student Beth Spencer and Professor Bill Baker presented a paper entitled “Using GIS and GLO Surveys to Reconstruct Historical Fire Regimes in Sagebrush,” at the 24th annual GIS in the Rockies Conference in Denver in August 2011. At the same conference, graduate student Paul Arendt and Professor Bill Baker presented a paper entitled “Using GIS to Measure Landscape Dynamics over the Past Century in a Semi-Arid Woodland, Colorado/Utah, U.S.A.”

Outstanding Teaching Awards

Four members of the faculty received teaching awards this past year. Dr. Deb Paulson and Dr. Roberta (Bobbi) Webster received Promoting Intellectual Engagement (PIE) awards. PIE awards are sponsored by LearN, the Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning, and Resident Life and Dining and “honor outstanding faculty who inspire students intellectually in first year courses.” Additionally, both Dr. Steve Prager and Dr. Jacqueline (J.J.) Shinker received Thumbs-Up Awards, which are given by the College of Arts and Sciences Student Council in “recognition of outstanding positive contributions to the University.”

Awards - Recognitions - Presentations

From left to right, Richard Vercoe, Suzette Savoie and Alexa Dugan.

From left to right: Dr. Roberta (Bobbi) Webster, Dr. Jacqueline (J.J.) Shinker, Dr. Steve Prager, and Dr. Deb Paulson

Photo by Jerry Webster.
Geography is a discipline that allows us to look at challenging issues from multiple perspectives. As geographers, we often borrow ideas and understanding from one place and use that as context to understand pressing issues in another location. Our work often takes us abroad and our breadth of understanding of complex issues increases accordingly.

This summer, Dr. Steven Prager and two graduate students traveled to Ethiopia to work on a collaborative research project with members of the International Water Management Institute. The two students, Ryan Anderson of Geography and Jason Edwards of the UW Program in Ecology, were able to experience first hand living and working in the beautiful and challenging countryside of the Ethiopian highlands and the Blue Nile Basin.

Just as water is an important issue to the State of Wyoming, water is incredibly important to people living throughout Ethiopia. In the highlands, for example, people grow a variety of crops ranging from teff (a local grain) to maize, peppers, millet and much more. These crops are produced using rain-fed agricultural techniques; either not enough or too much rain can cause an entire crop to fail with devastating consequences. Farmers in this region are thus intimately connected to the global environment and, consequently, global environmental change is adding a great deal of uncertainty to an already uncertain and often unpredictable agricultural process.

In Ethiopia, as in Wyoming, geographers are playing an important role in helping to understand how our environment is changing and how people can best respond to these changes given local, regional and global contexts. In the Blue Nile Basin, Dr. Prager, Ryan, Jason and two Ethiopian students collected data in an effort to understand social-ecological feedbacks and the role of such feedbacks in relation to improving water management practices and increasing resilience to environmental change.

Ryan and Jason are two among a growing number of students learning and applying geographic skills in an international setting. This is just one emphasis in the Department of Geography and we welcome inquiries related international opportunities or any of our other areas of distinction.

New Staff: Adrienne Szabady

Greetings! I joined the Department of Geography as an office assistant in July 2011, moving over from the Music Department where I worked for 7 years as an assistant to the Bands. I am originally from Philadelphia and moved to Laramie in 1977. I live in town with my husband, David Gregory, of 10 years and our 2 cats. I have a son who currently lives in Tucson, AZ with his wife and my granddaughter with a second granddaughter on the way. My hobbies include quilting, gardening and camping in our homemade teardrop trailer.
Dr. Roy J. Shlemon, a member of the Arts and Sciences Board of Visitors and frequent benefactor to the University of Wyoming, has generously donated $1,000 to the Department’s general fund. These dollars will be dedicated to support class field trips and to supplement the financial needs of students presenting their research at professional meetings. Recently, for example, students in Dr. Harty’s Images of the West course visited Medicine Bow due to its centrality to Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*. On another recent field trip, biogeography students traveled to Rocky Mountain National Park, and we hope to have our fluvial geomorphology students travel to nearby sites in the Snowy Range. The Department is also pleased that we aided five students to present research papers at the Association of American Geographers meeting in New York this spring. These are wonderful experiences for our students and the Department would like to expand its efforts to provide even greater support in the future. Dr. Shlemon would like this donation to be a challenge to other potential donors among our alumni and friends. We would be honored to receive any donations, no matter their size, towards matching Dr. Shlemon’s wonderful contribution.

Donor Challenge

The department is enormously grateful for your financial support.

I would like to make a gift of $__________ to the Department of Geography

- Shlemon Challenge Match Dollars
- The Department of Geography General Fund
- The Geography Scholarship Fund
- The Beiswenger Student Support Fund

Name: ____________________________

Address: ____________________________

City: __________________ State: _________ Zip: ____________

I/we would like to make my/our gift to Annual Giving:

ONLINE: Make a payment using our secure server: [www.uwyo.edu/giveonline](http://www.uwyo.edu/giveonline).

PHONE: Call the University of Wyoming Foundation during normal business hours:
(307) 766-6300 or (888) 831-7795.

MAIL: Send donations to UW Foundation, 1200 E. Ivinson Ave., Laramie, WY 82070
Make checks payable to *UW Foundation/Geography*

Thank you for your Support
Recent Faculty Publications

**Bill Baker**


**Bill Grib**


**Carl Legleiter**


**Steve Prager**


**Jerry Webster**


Faculty Highlight: Dr. Carl Legleiter

Following a record snowpack in the winter of 2010-2011, third-year assistant professor Dr. Carl J. Legleiter was concerned about his prospects for field work due to the high streamflows he was sure would result from the prolonged runoff. Fortunately, Legleiter was granted a research semester for Fall 2011 and was able to extend his field season into October after the rivers had receded to safer levels.

Working closely with graduate students Brandon Overstreet and Chip Rawlins, Legleiter first traveled to the Snake River in Grand Teton National Park in late August and early September. The research involved making field measurements of water depth, flow velocity, and optical characteristics to support the analysis of satellite images that were acquired at the same time. Legleiter is now using these images to produce continuous maps of water depth that highlight changes in channel morphology that occurred during the spring of 2011.

He and Overstreet next moved on to Yellowstone National Park’s Soda Butte Creek, the site of Legleiter’s dissertation research, to make a similar set of measurements and to continue a long-term tracer study that involves relocating tagged sediment particles to determine how far they move during each spring’s snowmelt.

Legleiter’s father Floyd also helped out during this stage of the field season. After a quick stop at home, Legleiter and Overstreet completed some topographic surveys along Savery Creek, where they are studying the effects of a reservoir completed in 2005 on the river below the new dam.

After that, the two researchers drove down to Colorado for a couple of days of surveying, velocity measurement, and optical data collection at the confluence of the Blue and Colorado Rivers, again with an eye toward mapping channel attributes from remotely sensed data. From there, Legleiter and Overstreet flew to Minnesota to conduct experiments at a unique “Outdoor Stream Lab” facility. Data collection for this study focused on documenting the effects of water surface roughness and suspended sediment concentrations in the reflectance characteristics of a small meandering channel.

These projects were supported by grants from the Office of Naval Research, the Wyoming Water Development Commission, and the Visitor Program at the St. Anthony Falls Laboratory. Legleiter and Overstreet are pleased to have collected such a massive amount of data in such a short amount of time last fall, and the analysis is now underway - stay tuned for more results from this dynamic research duo!

Faculty Highlight: Dr. Jacqueline J. Shinker

Having lived in many corners of the U.S. from Southern California to the East Coast, from the South to the Southwest and from the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest, I can honestly say, I really love the Intermountain West the best! The mountains, huge horizon lines, big clear skies, and yes, even the wind and snow all make for a great place to live and work (as a climatologist I really like the weather here)!

My research in the Geography Department focuses on understanding how atmospheric and surface conditions lead to drought. Since climate variability impacts snowfall, precipitation, temperature, and in turn streamflow and water availability, and with water being one of our most valuable resources (especially in the West), necessary for agriculture, energy production, recreation, as well as personal and natural consumptive use, Wyoming is a great place to study climate variations and trends that impact water resources.

The mountains in Wyoming area are a great laboratory for my climate research, because the snow that falls in the mountains acts as natural reservoirs for the headwaters to the Green-Colorado, Snake-Columbia and Platte-Missouri river basins in the U.S. Understanding how that precipitation in the mountains varies over time and what are some of the causes of changes in precipitation and subsequent water resources is a major component of ongoing research by myself and several graduate and undergraduate students in the Climate Lab. We use a variety of data sources including climate station and gridded model data to identify dry years in the past. By mapping a suite of climate variables associated with dry conditions, we can identify the spatial controls in the climate system that lead to those conditions.

This approach contributes to collaborative work with UW Geologists interested in understanding the climate mechanisms that lead to low lake levels and with UW Botanists interested in the climatic controls of vegetation change. Additionally, I am building research connections with UW researchers in Agriculture Economics who are interested in understanding the role of
identifying the role of changing temperatures on early stream flow runoff in the North Platte by McNair Scholar Josh Heyer; and the impact that El Nino and La Nina events have on the position of the jet stream (that delivers winter storms to our region) by undergraduate Pam Bolan (who is currently on leave in Washington, D.C.

Next time you look towards the mountains in Wyoming, think about the role that climate plays in snowfall, precipitation and water resources and ask yourself a simple question…. Got Water?

The Barracks of Heart Mountain, Wyoming: Vanishing Structures of a Contested Landscape

Story By Mac Blewer

During WW II, the U.S. Government imprisoned 110,000 Japanese Americans in ten camps across the U.S., including Wyoming’s Heart Mountain, as part of an ill-thought out policy to bolster domestic security. After 1945, the Camp’s barracks were sold and used by homesteaders, mostly veterans, as residences and ranch structures, some left intact, and others sectioned into fragments. Until recently, the fate of the barracks was a mystery except to some locals.

Over the last year, as part of a collaborative project between the Geography Department, the American Studies Program and the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation research was conducted in the communities around Heart Mountain. Barracks were photographed, mapped via GPS and current occupants were interviewed.

The camp originally contained over 400 barracks. To date, approximately sixty barracks and barrack fragments have been located. Although many have been considerably altered, tell-tale signs can be used in their identification: 1) the presence of external features such as original nine-pane windows, 2) their structural dimensions and 3) internal woodwork.

The barracks can be classified into three categories: 1) Classic Barracks – structures that have retained their original characteristics; 2) Altered Barracks – structures that were built out of barracks’ parts or structurally altered, and 3) “Mystery Barracks” – structures that are nearly impossible to identify due to the alterations’ scope.

These structures are some of the only vestiges of the original camp. Although Heart Mountain is still a “contested landscape,” with locals holding a myriad of views regarding the site, the buildings’ presence has helped focus attention on a common living structure, an enduring reminder of the area’s history. States Dr. Eric Sandeen, “Undoubtedly, the presence of these structures has been essential in helping the community embrace its past while forging ahead with the creation of a new identity. Additionally, the barracks can teach future generations about the hardships experienced by the prisoners and the homesteaders.”

These populations came from different states but the challenges that they faced were similar to the harsh weather and sparse living conditions. Therefore these structures can be viewed as symbols of endurance and perseverance.

The barracks can also be viewed as structures of pride. Many of the prisoners constructed gardens and other barracks “beautification” projects. And for the homesteaders who built homes from them they represent a time of ingenuity. States Arley George, “each homestead has its unique history…. I’m really proud of my parents for what they’ve done. For what they’ve built here and the fact that they’ve stayed with it and didn’t give up.”

With many of these structures falling into disrepair or being destroyed, decisive action needs to be taken to further record and preserve this vanishing part of a valuable cultural landscape.
WHAT IN THE WORLD is a publication of the University of Wyoming Department of Geography. The Spring 2012 edition was compiled by Mr. Kyle Graves and Dr. Bobbi Webster with contributions from faculty, staff, students and alumni. For further information or to submit news items for publication, please contact Barbara Powell at bp@uwyo.edu.